

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON

1963

OSD Declassification/Release Instructions on File

Dear John:

I believe that the estimates of the strength of Soviet ground forces contained in JCS communications to me (e.g. 132 divisions in Eastern Europe by M 490) and in the recent NIE 11-14-62 (80 combat-ready divisions) overstate actual Soviet strength by a wide margin. Moreover, the over-all capabilities of Soviet ground forces appear to be overstated. The NIE indicates that these forces are "well-trained and equipped with excellent materiel." The JCS studies assume that United States and Soviet divisions of like type have comparable capabilities.

I cannot understand how the Soviets could possibly achieve such strength with the resources available to them. How is it that the Soviets can get 80 combat-ready divisions out of a two million man army if we can get but 16 out of an army of nearly a million? The NIE indicates that the Soviets could have 100 combat-ready divisions within 30 days of mobilization. We have to spend at an annual rate of \$3.3 billion to equip 22 divisions. By that standard, the Soviets would have to be spending \$15 billion a year to equip 100 divisions. It is difficult to see how they could be spending more than a third of that amount.

If these estimates are overstatements, they are doing a great deal of harm by causing our NATO Allies and many Americans to despair of the possibility of achieving adequate non-nuclear forces.

I believe that we need a new and thorough study of the problem by CIA and DIA. Members of my staff will be made available to assist in this study to the extent deemed advisable by you and General Carroll. Such a study should re-evaluate the estimates and assess the ranges of uncertainty concerning the following aspects of the Soviet ground forces: manpower allocation, training, and utilization; equipment inventories, annual procurement increments, and procedures for acquiring, storing, and handling equipment; and quality of ground forces in terms of firepower, mobility, readiness, manning levels, logistics, etc. We very much need a thorough study, but, because of the urgency of the problem, I would very much like to receive a preliminary report within about six months. However, I feel that a long run program to improve our estimates in this area is also required.

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Finally, I believe that it is essential that all estimates of Soviet force levels be required to meet reasonable tests of economic feasibility. This means that NIE's should include cost estimates and over-all budgetary implications of the estimated forces. It would be very useful to me to know how the Soviets are allocating their military expenditures. Rough estimates of the amounts they are spending for various categories of forces would enable us to form better judgments of the quality of their forces. I think that the progress of the CIA-DIA Joint Analysis Group in this respect is encouraging. But I would very much like to see the same concepts applied as soon as possible to projections from the current year forward (and to the recent past).

I would be most grateful for your help.

Sincerely,



Robert S. McNamara

Honorable John A. McCone
Director, Central Intelligence
Washington 25, D. C.